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Assemblymember Huffman and Senator Leno Oppose Governor's Proposal to Spend General Fund Dollars for “Cadillac Death Row”

Sacramento, CA— In response to the Schwarzenegger Administration’s decision to move forward with the expansion of the death row inmate complex at San Quentin Prison by providing a \$64 million General Fund loan to kick start construction, Assemblymember Jared Huffman (D-San Rafael) and Senator Mark Leno (D-San Francisco) released the following statements.

Statement from Assemblymember Jared Huffman:

“At a time when the state may be two weeks away from sending IOUs and when the Governor is attempting to furlough 156,000 state workers citing our impending cash crisis, it is stunningly hypocritical that he is surreptitiously – and quite possibly illegally – borrowing \$64 million from the state’s deteriorating General Fund in order to advance his favorite pet prison project: the \$400 million “Cadillac Death Row” at San Quentin. It’s a project that has been stalled by the budget crisis, by the courts, and by the inability to sell bonds due to pending litigation and the uncertain legality of proceeding with construction. It’s also a project that the Legislative Analyst found to be so wildly expensive that they recommended scrapping it, and the State Auditor concluded that it would likely provide a very short-term solution for housing condemned inmates since the condemned inmate population would exceed its undersized capacity within three years of completion. If built, this would be the most expensive inmate housing ever built, at a cost of more than \$500,000 per cell.

The Governor’s shockingly misplaced priorities would move California’s general fund \$64 million closer to insolvency. At a time when the general fund crisis is already deferring payments to local governments and schools, and our dwindling cash reserves portend IOUs for everyone who does business with the state and imminent shortages for our education system, our healthcare safety net, and front-line public safety needs, it is simply unconscionable for the Governor to prioritize this \$400 million boondoggle.

The Governor should take care of our highest priorities with the limited cash we have in the general fund, and work to resolve the legal questions that have impeded the sale of

bonds for his Cadillac Death Row instead of raiding the general fund for this controversial project.”

Statement from Senator Mark Leno:

”While California is in the midst of a dire financial crisis, the Schwarzenegger Administration is pushing forward with the expansion of San Quentin’s death row, without first exploring any alternatives. I continue to oppose this deeply flawed project. The proposed construction and operating costs will exceed \$1.6 billion over the next 11 years, and despite the cost and increased capacity, the new inmate complex would run out of space by 2014. The governor’s proposal to use General Fund dollars for this ill-conceived project at a time when he is decimating support for our children’s education and the sustenance of services for seniors and children makes no sense at all. The Schwarzenegger Administration should take the necessary steps to explore alternatives to the expansion of San Quentin before acting recklessly with taxpayer dollars and one of the California coast’s most beautiful and precious stretches of land.”

For more information, view the Legislative Analyst’s Office assessment of the San Quentin Condemned Inmate Complex expansion proposal:

http://www.lao.ca.gov/analysis_2008/crim_justice/cj_anl08012.aspx#zzee_link_8_1202846137

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